

Philosophy 101: Main Problems
Summer Session I, 2016
MTWThF 11:30-1
Caldwell Hall 103

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Office Hours:

Course description: This course serves as an introduction to philosophy in the western tradition. Topics will include personal identity, free will and moral responsibility, and the problem of evil. The course will place a strong emphasis on learning how to read and understand philosophical texts and how to assess and produce philosophically compelling arguments.

Course Policies:

Electronic Devices: Electronic devices are not allowed in class. If this will be a hardship for you, please send me an email or talk to me in person.

Readings: In an effort to keep book costs down, I will post many of the readings on Sakai. Because of the electronic device policy, however, **you will have to print out the readings for each class.** Many of the readings for this course are dense and challenging. Don't get discouraged! This is a course designed for students with no previous experience reading philosophical texts, and philosophical reading is one of the main skills you'll develop in this course.

Participation: I expect you to come to class having read that day's assigned text(s) and prepared to discuss them with your classmates. This means having objections and questions on your mind for every reading. If you are confused about the reading, you should feel free to say so (you won't be the only one!). Articulating your reasons for confusion can be philosophically valuable and can help to clarify the issues you're struggling with.

It is essential to the experience of this course that everyone participates, and does so not just by addressing me, but also by addressing each other. This kind of interaction requires that everyone be respectful (and nice!) to each other when speaking. A great deal of philosophical dialogue is based on offering, rejecting, and defending arguments, and so it can be tempting, at times, to become loud or even hostile. Don't do it! Do not talk over your classmates, raise your hand before speaking, and be charitable if you disagree with something someone else has said. It's perfectly fine (and even good) to disagree, but be kind in doing so. Philosophy at its best is a collaborative endeavor; we learn most when we listen to each other.

Late Work and Grading: If you need an extension, ask for one in advance. I'll give it to you—you don't even need an explanation. But I don't accept late work unless you've arranged for an extension **in advance**.

In general, I use a blind grading policy. When grading, I use the Registrar's standards for assigning letter grades. You can find the explanation of letter grades here:

<http://registrar.unc.edu/academic-services/grades/explanation-of-grading-system/>

Honor Code: Your full observance of the UNC Honor Code is expected. Please familiarize yourself with the section on Academic Dishonesty in The Instrument of Student Judicial Governance, accessible here:

<http://studentconduct.unc.edu/sites/studentconduct.unc.edu/files/documents/Instrument.pdf>

Course Requirements:

Daily Writing and Participation (40%): As I've written above, I expect to you participate consistently during class discussions. Additionally, we will begin every class period with a 10-15 minute writing assignment on the previous day's readings. To get participation credit for that day, your response will need to demonstrate a basic comprehension of that day's reading assignment. I will do my best to grade these responses and return them to you at the end of the following class day.

Two 5-7 Page Papers (25% each for a total of 50%): You will be asked to write two 5-7 page papers. In these papers, you will have to analyze a philosophical argument that we've discussed in class and also produce and defend arguments of your own.

Final Exam on Wed, June 15 from 11:30-2:30 (10%): The final exam will have a short-answer format.

Reading Schedule:

Note: Depending on how quickly we're able to move through the readings, this schedule is subject to change.

INTRODUCTION

Wed, May 11: Review syllabus, introduce philosophical arguments

Thurs, May 12: Jim Prior, "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper"

Fri: May 13: Plato, "Euthyphro"

GOD AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Mon, May 16: Pascal, "The Wager"

Tues, May 17: Dostoevsky, "The Brothers get Acquainted" and "Rebellion"; Robert Frost, "Design"

Wed, May 18: *Book of Job*; Dostoevsky, "The Grand Inquisitor"

Thurs, May 19: Dostoevsky, "The Russian Monk"

Fri, May 20: Recap

FREE WILL AND RESPONSIBILITY

Mon, May 23: Galen Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility"

Tues, May 24: Selections from the work of Frederick Douglas; George Moses Horton, "On Liberty and Slavery," Emma Lazerus, "The New Colossus," Abraham Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address"

Wed, May 25: Susan Wolf, "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility"

Thurs, May 26: Robert Adams, "Involuntary Sins"

Fri, May 27: Recap and paper workshop

PERSONAL IDENTITY

Mon, May 30: NO CLASS

Tues, May 31: John Perry, "Night One" (paper #1 due at the beginning of class)

Wed, June 1: Perry, "Night Two"

Thurs, June 2: Perry, "Night Three"

Fri, June 3: Recap

ETHICS

Mon, June 6: Marilyn Frye, "Oppression"

Tues, June 7: Thomas Nagel, "War and Massacre"

Wed, June 8: Thomas Hill, "Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving Natural Environments"

Thurs, June 9: Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints"

Fri, June 10: Recap and paper workshop

Mon, June 13: Review session (paper #2 due at the beginning of class)